Peer-review report of

Ponizovskiy, V., Weißflog, M.I., Osin, E., & Grigoryan, L. (2026). War, what is it good for? Propaganda, value-instantiating beliefs, war support and resistance in Russia. *advances.in/psychology, 1*, e825539. https://doi.org/10.56296/aip00054

Round 1

Editor Decision

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting your important work, “War, what is it good for?” to our special issue on the Psychology of Pushback. We were fortunate to receive reviews from two experts in political psychology and the study of repressive regimes, and we are grateful for their detailed feedback. In addition, we each evaluated your manuscript independently before reviewing the two external assessments.

We recognize several strengths in your research. The paper draws on a potentially unique sample from a repressive regime, collected during a critical political period. The questions you pursue are timely theoretically and practically, and your work aligns well with the theme of the special issue. Also, your focus on VIBs is original. At the same time, we see substantial areas for improvement.

As you will see from the accompanying comments, while also seeing potential in your work, both reviewers had some substantial reservations about the current manuscript. We will not restate every point here, as the reviewers have articulated their concerns clearly.

These, and some of our additional concerns from our own independent readings of your work, led to our assessment that the current version of your research is not yet suitable for publication as part of our special issue. Nevertheless, given the many admirable qualities of the work, we encourage you to pursue revising the manuscript and resubmitting it for further consideration. There are no guarantees about the final outcome; given the substantive nature of the issues raised about key elements of the work, we cannot predict the outcome. The final determination will depend upon how effectively you address the concerns that are raised. Addressing these points will not require the inclusion of additional data, but it will involve some re-thinking, re-writing, and re-analysis.

While we ask that you address each point made by the two reviewers in your revision, we wish to highlight a few that we consider especially critical.

Reviewer 1 regards the sample as potentially highly valuable, while also expressing strong concerns about its validity. For example, they note, “The core strength (and potentially the core weakness; see below) is that it presents data on political action collected within Russia,” and go on to ask, “Who are the participants? What do they represent? Why did these participants agree to take part in an online survey that asks about political topics in a highly repressive, nearly totalitarian country?” These

are fundamental questions that should be addressed, and, if possible, examined empirically. We agree that the data have value, but it is essential to emphasize that the results cannot necessarily be taken at face value.

Reviewer 1 also calls for greater clarity regarding the theoretical framework, the hypotheses tested, and the analyses employed, which they view as unnecessarily complex. Reviewer 2 concurs, describing the analyses as consisting of “convoluted tests and steps” and questioning the causal order assumed in your work. We share this assessment.

In addition to the specific points made the two reviewers, we believe that substantial streamlining and reframing of the manuscript, as outlined below, are needed.

GENERAL FRAMING
Conceptual, empirical, and analytical aspects of your work require substantial reframing.

With respect to conceptual issues, even though you present your research questions as partly exploratory, the manuscript would be stronger if the theoretical background were presented in a more tightly-organized way making some of your key points clearer and more fully detailed and describing the conceptual landscape in a way that readers can better recognize where the current work is situated in that landscape and how it potentially advances theory. Near the end of the Introduction, you have a paragraph about how the current study extends the literature by examining a novel mechanism, but it was hard to “connect the dots” between these statements and the preceding literature review. Similarly, the connections between the main questions you pose in the Introduction and your analyses and results need to be better articulated. One way of doing this would be to include near the end of the Introduction a “Current Research” section that provides an overview of the key empirical elements of your work and details how it can potential advance theory in particular ways, places the measures included in the study within a conceptual framework, and explains how the findings of the work can inform the questions that guided the research.

Along those lines, where you have a more extended discussion about the conceptualization of propaganda, it would be helpful to briefly summarize the current state of research on propaganda (what is known) and how the current research builds upon or complements that body of work to address what is not currently known. For example, how novel is the argument you make about the role of values in propaganda. Providing a fuller description of the literature on propaganda will help readers understand and appreciate the magnitude of theoretical contribution that you work can offer.

The concept of value instantiating beliefs (VIBs) is central to your work, but it would be helpful if you elaborated on the statement you make – “Value-instantiating beliefs (VIBs) were proposed as a way of capturing context specific differences in the

motivational meaning of events" – to give readers a deeper understanding of the key dynamics.

Overall, while elements of your Introduction are engagingly written, we ask for a more integrated, streamlined, and tightly organized presentation that makes the case for the potential novel theoretical contribution of the current work clearer and more compelling.

Reframing is also needed with respect to empirical and analytical aspects of your manuscript. The correlational data are not suitable for testing mediation, let alone serial mediation, and the manuscript contains extensive use of inappropriate causal language. Moreover, your mediation model assumes causal effects in a context where reverse causality (values → choice of media consumption) is highly likely. We recommend avoiding mediation testing altogether and focusing instead on simple associations. In doing so, it would be valuable to combine both variable-centered and person-centered analyses as you partly already do. Specifically, we suggest the following:

1. Present regressions showing how the VIBs are uniquely associated with each media consumption variable, controlling for the covariates as you currently do.
2. Present regressions showing how the VIBs are uniquely associated with the two political action variables, again with covariates.
3. Move on to person-centered analyses, conducting LPA (instead of cluster analyses, which is a less nuanced analytic procedure). Here, please describe profile differences based on the profiling variables (VIBs, including 95% confidence intervals and formal comparative tests), and then test for profile differences in media consumption and political action while accounting for profiling uncertainty (using the HCM or a similar procedure) and the covariates.

We understand that this represents a significant deviation from the pre-registered analyses. However, we do not consider the data appropriate for most of the pre-registered tests, and it is also clear that you have not fully adhered to most of those planned analyses. Therefore, please add a section at the end of the introduction that transparently describes this deviation:

1. Clearly explain the specific deviations made, noting which of them were undertaken in response to external feedback during the review process.
2. Identify the analyses that were not conducted (and that were never presented to us during the review), and explain why this decision was made. Please also confirm that these analyses are not planned for inclusion in a different manuscript or are already published, as we cannot accept the paper if that is the case.
3. Clarify which pre-registered analyses were ultimately conducted as a result of these deviations.

In addition to these major issues of reframing, we have several specific points that we ask that you address in your revision.

TITLE

The title should clearly convey the main finding of the study; in its current form, it is too vague.

ABSTRACT

In the abstract, please describe the results much more clearly. For example, specify which profiles you identified and how they differed in concrete terms. Indicate exactly what forms of political action you measured, the valence of the associations observed, and any other key distinctions in your findings.

INTRODUCTION

While the introductory paragraph is engaging and conveys the practical relevance of the work, it would be valuable to complement that with 2-3 sentences on the theoretical context for the work, explaining specifically how the current work can potentially advance theory. This additional material should foreshadow the point you make a little later about how propaganda can relate to meaning-making and describes the potential novel contribution of that focus of the current work.

Your introduction should also better prepare readers for the two media consumption measures you use. Explain why they matter and what differences one might expect between them. The same applies to media trust: although it is measured, it is not introduced or explained in the opening section.

This sentence needs more precision: “The largest land war in Europe since 1945, the invasion resulted in dozens if not hundreds of thousands killed on the Ukrainian side and up to a million killed and wounded among the Russian military.” You seem to mean to say, “killed or wounded.”

METHODS

There is some inconsistency in the prior literature regarding factorial support for all social value dimensions. Please provide some evidence of factorial support in your analyses. While this may be challenging given that you have only two items per value, it remains important. Conducting an EFA could be beneficial. If the results suggest that certain dimensions should be combined, please proceed accordingly.

When outlining the value dimensions, please provide VIB item examples for each dimension. You could also incorporate these examples into the first table you present.

In your power analysis, please specify which model or analysis it pertains to.

You state that the sample was stratified to be representative of gender in Russian society, yet your sample is gender-balanced—whereas in reality, there are significantly more women in Russian society due to quite drastically differential mortality. Please explain why this divergence occurred. In addition, outline the extent to which the final sample was representative on other demographical variables. Further, means on psychological control variables can be descriptively compared to those obtained outside wartime and, if possible, during periods when Russia was less repressive than it is at present. This can help tell us more about who the participants are relative to the population.

Cronbach's alpha is not appropriate for scales consisting of only two items; please report correlations instead. Also, provide reliability estimates (either alphas or correlations) for all scales, rather than reporting ranges. In addition, clarify the scale on which the VIBs were measured and explain how mean values can be negative, as shown in one of your tables. Why was one VIB dimension measured with three items and the rest with two?

Please specify, with appropriate references and version numbers, the statistical software and libraries you used.

RESULTS

Please include a correlation table.

Please provide formal statistical tests for statements such as, "Pro-state media were used more than independent media, and trusted slightly more."

The VIBs are of core descriptive interest. Please visualize their means and distributions with 95% confidence intervals, preferably using violin plots.

In addition, Figure 1 is missing confidence intervals. If the scores were person-centered, please clarify why they range from 0 to 6.

It is essential to report the number of participants in each cluster.

Any description of agreement between clusters requires formal testing. Please provide tests for each VIB, including effect sizes.

You state that participants view the war as aligning "with the traditions handed down by previous generations…," but this does not appear to match what your VIBs measure, which seem to focus on perceived benefit. Please reconcile this discrepancy.

You write, "Three items were dropped from the SDO scale due to low loadings." Explain how this affected internal consistency (e.g., alpha), which should improve after item removal. This comment may be unnecessary if the analyses are simplified as recommended.

DISCUSSION

Given the substantial analytic reframing, the discussion will also require major revision. In addition, please include a thorough discussion of potential problems with your sample – acknowledge that you discuss these limitations also in the abstract.

You write that some people “buy into the beneficial aspects of the war.” This assumes that VIBs result from propaganda, which your study did not test. This comment will likely become irrelevant after the recommended reframing.

Stylistic issues:

- Please spell out numbers under 12 unless when referring to statistics.
- The font size currently changes throughout the manuscript.
- When a sentence starts with a number, the number needs to be spelled out (l. 158, applies other places as well).
- Statistical Latin characters need to be presented in italics.
- Scale endpoint labels need to be italicized.
- Please proofread the manuscript. For instance, There are missing words (e.g., l. 224; typos (e.g., l. 261), and contractions (i.e., “didn’t”) that should be avoided
- The reference list is inconsistent. Provide Dois in URL format for all journal articles (sometimes these are missing, other times you present non-Doi urls, i.e., to psycnet). Also, please provide the editor names for chapters in edited books.
- On l. 58, there is an extra comma that needs to be deleted.

In conclusion, while we see value in your study, major revisions will be necessary for it to be considered for publication in this special issue. Although we cannot guarantee a positive outcome, we would not extend this invitation if we did not believe it possible for you to achieve. We see considerable potential in your study and view it as a potentially impactful study, and we hope you are not discouraged by the breadth of our comments. Our aim is to help make the paper as competitive as possible. We therefore invite you to revise and resubmit the manuscript. Given the scope of the revisions, we are allowing six weeks for completion, with a deadline of September 30. If you require additional time, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best,

Jonas R. Kunst & John F. Dovidio

Reviewer 1

Start with writing a section that summarizes the paper and its key findings.

The ms focuses on the relationship between propaganda and political action in Russia. To explain this relationship, it presents a theory centered on value-instantiating beliefs (VIBs). In short, the theory suggests that people construe war, as presented in the Russian media, in terms of consequences for their basic values, such as security (e.g., Russians may view war as either undermining or enhancing people's personal security). Drawing on a sample of ca 1000 Russian respondents, the ms reports relationships, including mediational ones, between several proxies of VIBs and political action. For example, the ms reports that media consumption (pro-regime vs. independent) predicts several VIBs, which in turn predict behavioral intentions to engage in political action in support of (vs against) the war in Ukraine.

Then, start with highlighting the positive aspects of the manuscript.

The core strength (and potentially the core weakness; see below) is that it presents data on political action collected within Russia. It is extremely difficult to obtain survey data in Russia on political topics—due to severe political repression—and even more difficult to obtain such data that reflects authentic attitudes, beliefs, etc.—because people's responding in Russia is influenced by the presence of severe repression (I elaborate this point below).

Another potential strength is the theoretical model. I say "potential", because I personally do not find it helpful in clarifying the phenomena under question. It involves unnecessary abstraction and jargon to describe what could be conveyed more directly (elaborated below). I had to read the theory section multiple times, and I remain unsure about the meaning of many terms and statements.

Still, this is my subjective perspective, and other readers, reviewers, or editors may find the theory useful. For example, consider lines 368–370: "We argue that propaganda, apart from (or more importantly than) providing evaluation of events, provides meaningful narratives relating events to important principles in lives – in this case, to conservation values". Also, lines 414–416: "Instead of treating propaganda as a mere tool for ideological alignment, we focused on its content: the meaning that it offers to events via linking them to universal conceptions of the good". For some readers, this may constitute noteworthy theoretical insights.

The various results presented in Figure 2, taken together, may also offer an empirical picture that might be useful—if the data were credible. However, I have serious reservations about the credibility of the data (see the specific comments below).

Next, identify potential limitations or weaknesses with regards to factors…

…such as the authors' theoretical arguments

1. I fail to understand the usefulness of the chosen theoretical framework centered on VIBs. For example, lines 92–95: "Measuring and comparing the VIBs across the 10 values allows estimating the 'motivational meaning' of an action or event: does an individual see car travel as primarily a safe option to travel? A threat to the environment? A pleasant activity?" What do we gain from such classification? What

does this framework tell us that we couldn't learn simply by measuring how people perceive cars?

2. Overall, and as explained in my overall assessment of contributions above, I find the theoretical framework unnecessarily complex, jargon-heavy, and not helpful in guiding the empirical analysis. One could simply test how different types of media exposure relate to different beliefs among participants (e.g., attitudes toward the war) and then conduct a mediation analysis using those as variables. Rather than relying on VIBs and other abstract constructs, one could argue that different people perceive war in different ways along the dimensions outlined in the manuscript (e.g., security), and these differences then relate to different intentions for political action.

Hypotheses

3. Numbers of hypotheses in the paper do not correspond to those in the preregistration form. In fn1, it is stated that "These hypotheses [H1, H1a, and H1b] correspond to H1 and H4 of the preregistration protocol". But they in fact correspond to H4, H4a, and H4b.

4. Also, why is only this selection of three hypotheses reported, when the preregistration includes 10 hypotheses? The authors state in fn1: "Additional hypotheses regarding trust towards the media and conspiracy beliefs (H2 and H3) were preregistered but are not included in this paper". No explanation is given for this omission. And what about the remaining hypotheses—why are they excluded from the present ms?

Research design/method

5. The ms provides little information about the surveyed sample. Who are the participants? What do they represent? Why did these participants agree to take part in an online survey that asks about political topics in a highly repressive, nearly totalitarian country? The authors themselves note in lines 150–155: "In all materials, the Russian invasion of Ukraine was referred to as 'The special military operation in Ukraine,' as at that time the use of the word 'war' was criminally prosecuted". This highlights the severity of repression people face within Russia. Under such conditions—where even using a single word can result in imprisonment—why would anyone participate in an online survey involving political issues, and why would they risk expressing views that could be interpreted as critical of the regime? The sample is likely to be heavily skewed toward a very specific subset of the population, e.g., highly risk prone individuals, underground members of opposition, etc. This issue deserves discussion, and there is no such discussion in the present ms.

6. Even assuming a highly untypical sample, another critical concern is the credibility of the responses. Why would respondents provide honest answers in an online survey whose purpose and intentions they cannot verify? For example, how could the respondents be certain that this isn't a regime attempt to identify dissidents? How can they trust that the researchers can ensure anonymity and confidentiality, when expressing support for political action against the war can, and routinely does, result in imprisonment?

Why, then, should we trust these responses? To be clear, I do not mean to suggest that the data necessarily reflects widespread falsification or is entirely uninformative. The problem is that the authors have made no explicit attempt to evaluate the credibility of data or the degree to which it captures anything reality reflecting and/or generalizable about political dynamics in Russia.

So, on the one hand, this is a rare piece of evidence—and a commendable attempt to access a population that is otherwise extremely difficult to reach. But on the other hand, the data are presented as largely unproblematic, taken at face value. Whatever participants have responded seems to have been treated as if it came from Denmark or Canada, and is analyzed accordingly, with conclusions drawn as if there were no concerns about data quality or respondent motivation.

7. Line 158 states: “1011 people gave informed consent to participate in the study”. I would be curious to know what the informed consent form explained to prospective participants. What was the study described as being about? Who were the researchers? From which institutions? These are the kinds of details that informed consent forms typically must include. I was unable to find these materials among the files in the OSF repository. Even small pieces of information, such as the study’s political focus or its affiliation with foreign institutions, could easily discourage participation and result in sample selection bias. From my own experience conducting surveys in repressive countries: local survey agencies report that participants often drop out once they see that the survey is about politics. Respondents are often afraid that surveys might be tools of the states, designed to identify dissidents.

8. There’s also the issue of strategic responding. Participants may try to infer who is behind the study and what the researchers expect. If they see that the study comes from "Western" universities, they may respond in ways they believe align—or intentionally do not align—with perceived expectations. Some may believe the survey is conducted by the regime; others may harbor anti-Western attitudes and purposely distort their answers. These are real risks when dealing with politicized topics, such as a war (often construed as existential) in autocratic countries.

9. Many other questions arise when conducting online surveys with populations under intense repression. Most ordinary people lack specialized IT knowledge and may adopt a better safe than sorry” approach to anything that could compromise their or their family’s safety. They may ask: “How do I know my responses aren't being tracked?”—especially in a country where the regime has extensive surveillance capabilities and a proven track record of suppressing opposition with great effectiveness.

10. To be clear, I am not saying that the data is without value. But at a minimum, these issues deserve discussion. Ideally, the authors would go further than a mere discussion by attempting to assess and quantify potential sources of bias. Who are the non-responders? What does the dropout rate look like, and at what stages of the survey does it occur? If sample selection bias is present, how severe might it be, and in what direction would it skew the findings?

11. The survey used direct questioning methods for politically sensitive topics. Yet there are many indirect questioning techniques available—such as item count (or list experiments), endorsement experiments, or randomized response techniques—that can help elicit more honest responses under conditions of fear of repression. The authors should explain why these were not used.

12. Lines 165-166: “To assess media consumption, we measured frequency of use of pro-state and independent media sources using a scale from 1 (“almost never”) to 5 (“every day”)”. Why would people, in a country where they can be put to jail for simply using word “war”, report to an online questionnaire that they are consuming opposition media?

13. Even more so, the 21-iem scale to measure VIBs toward the war, contains negative appraisals of war. For example, “The special military operation...would be unsafe for me”. Same with measures of attitudes toward the war. Why would people risk saying something negative in an online study about the war, in a country where this is routinely and effectively prosecuted? Once again, I am not saying that there are no people who are brave enough to express their genuine opinions. But the current ms does very little self-reflection on this. It just takes data coming in from a highly repressed society as if it came from a free country.

14. When it comes to behavioral intentions, this is becoming even more of a problem. Consider the formulations “I want to / I intend to / I plan to take part in political action against the war in Ukraine”. If this got into the hands of security apparatus, people would go to jail, be tortured, etc.—the possibility Russians are aware of. Why would one answer this response honestly?

…data (was it made openly available?)

Yes.

…presentation of results (including appropriateness of figures and tables)

15. Table 2: The results seem to speak against some of my criticisms above. That is, it shows considerable consumption of independent media, intentions to engage in action against the war. This suggests to me the sample is likely composed of risk-takers/opposition, that is unlikely to be representative of the overall population.

16. For example, the ms reports, “Average attitudes towards the [war] were also close to neutral, veering on the negative”. Considering the severity of repression (so that even using the word “war” can put one into jail), who are the respondents who are comfortable reporting negative attitudes toward the war?

17. Also, the means for items measuring VIBs most also seem negative, implying people are fine reporting their negative beliefs about the war.

18. The presentation of results could be improved: There is no clear correspondence between H1, H1a, and H1b. It would be helpful to just simply state: “To test H1, we have conducted...”. Now, the reader must figure what tests constitutes the test of which hypothesis.

Modeling:

…appropriate interpretation and discussion of results

19. Lines 379–381: “Empirically, using a quota sample from an authoritarian country at war, we show that even in a repressive context with a heavily funded propaganda machine, substantial variation in construals exists”. You would expect variation in these variables in any context.

discussion of weaknesses and limitations

20. Line 390: "While the patterns that we present here are robust". Robustness of results has not been explicitly demonstrated (e.g., I see no tests with alternative modeling techniques, measures, etc.).

abstract and title (Do they accurately reflect the content of the manuscript?)

21. The abstract contains some unnecessary jargon and indirect language. For example, the last sentence: “Our findings offer a novel cognitive-motivational mechanism for modeling the effects of propaganda on behaviour, suggesting the power lies not only in persuasion or fear, but in shaping the people's perceptions of moral affordances and threats”. What do you really mean by perceptions of moral affordances and threats? Whose power? What kind of power?

In your review, the following criteria can guide your evaluation:

Scope (Does the topic of the paper fit the journal?)

22. I believe, yes.

Novelty (Does the information provided in the paper extend the current knowledge in the field?)

23. It would, if the data were credible. Although political/collective action has been widely studied in social psychological research, very few studies come from repressive countries, where dynamics of collective action are very different. Nicole Tausch, Julia Becker, and their associates have published several articles using such samples (including Russia), highlighting the lack and need of such research, as well as discussing the dynamics of collective action in repressive contexts. This work is not engaged in the present ms.

Soundness (Are the method and analyses adequately conducted? Is the approach suited to answer the research question?)

24. Based on my comments above, unfortunately, my trust/believability in the reporting findings, is low. This is not only because I believe the data is of low credibility, but also because the authors have not made an attempt to assess the credibility of the data. It seems that the ms fails to appreciate the fact that survey data coming from highly repressed countries requires additional scrutiny vs data coming from non-repressive countries.

Impact (How important will the manuscript be for the field, society at large, and/or practice?)

25. It would be an important study if the data were credible or credibility issues were explicitly addressed.

Clarity (Is the paper written in clear and adequate English?)

26. Lines 43-45. One sentence paragraph. A rule of thumb is to have at least three sentences per paragraph.

27. Lines 61-62: “We argue that propaganda appeals to values – broad ideas of the desirable such as safety, status, kindness – and provides people with ways to express themselves in ways that are both personally meaningful and acceptable to the state”. The definition of “values” is unclear (“broad ideas of the desirable such a safety...”). I fail to understand this definition. What are “values”? This is a central concept and must be defined clearly.

28. After reading the text below, I found a clearer definition, in lines 77-81. I would recommend moving this upfront. Still, even in this definition, language is indirect. E.g., "reflects evolutionary needs”. What does this mean? (I do have a hunch what the authors refer here to, but the language is implicit/imprecise, and not everyone will have such intuitions).

29. Next paragraph, lines 65-72: Very difficult to understand. It contains a lot of jargon. Consider “Value-instantiating beliefs (VIBs) were proposed as a way of capturing context-specific differences in the motivational meaning of events”.

30. Lines 66-67: “...a comprehensive typology of motives for value appeals”. I don't understand this bit. What are “motives for value appeals”? Also, what are “motivational meanings of events”? Some more direct expressions could help useful.

31. Table 1: The table is titled: Basic Human Values and their Definitions. There are two columns: “Value Type” and “Defintion”. However, some “Definitions” are not really definitions, but simply lists/series of examples or sub-categories of the “Value Type”. For example, there is the category of “Stimulation” under Value Type column, and then “Excitement, novelty, and challenge in life” under the Definition columns. This is not a definition. Definition defines/describes some concept or a term, and can include exemplifying, but is not limited to just exemplifying.

32. Research question comes only on page 5: “By asking the Russian public about the perceived consequences of the war for values, we operationalise the question at the heart of this paper: what is war good for? – not normatively, but psychologically: what threats and opportunities does the war present to people in terms of their core values?” This is also in contrast to the question posed in the first sentence of Introduction: “What role does propaganda play in decisions to resist or comply in an authoritarian society?”. Then, we have more specific RQs on page 5:

"RQ1: Are there coherent construals of the war which emerge from the patterns of reported VIBs?

RQ2: If so, are these construals predictive of intentions to resist or support the war effort?

RQ3: Are they predicted over and above other relevant predictors of support for government-sanctioned violence?".

But these questions also do not clearly correspond to hypotheses:

"H1: The association between news consumption and attitude and intention is mediated by VIBs.

H1a: Consumption of pro-government media predicts more positive VIBs about the war, which in turn predict a more positive attitude and stronger intention to act in support of the war, as well as weaker intention to protest the war.

H1b: Consumption of oppositional media predicts less positive VIBs about the war which in turn predict less positive attitude and less intention to act in support of the war, as well as more intention to protest the war."

Reviewer 2

This article presents a clear and important question: how does propaganda shape political action in authoritarian regimes? The answer according to these authors is that it does so by assigning meaning to events in values-terms, in terms of the frameworks of basic human values and value-instantiating beliefs.

The authors' survey, however, showed that Russians vary significantly in the values they use to make sense of the War in Ukraine, in terms of security, benevolence, and tradition. They use cluster analysis to differentiate between two groups in terms of perceived consequences for conservation values, with ones profile explaining behavioural intentions. One's values are shown to mediate the relationship between media exposure and political action intentions.

This article's strengths are its sophisticated theoretical understanding and proposition of how propaganda—authoritarian or otherwise—works.

Yet the article has problems. These include:

1. lack of tests of alternative explanations, potentially including narratives and values associations regardless of propaganda. These are highly plausible given the narrative essence of nation building and national self-understanding globally.
2. convoluted tests and steps. Rather than assess the basic question on its own terms broadly, the paper goes on multiple further research questions regarding media effects. The aim of introducing the media like this is to introduce exogeneity (see figure 2), but choice of media is anything but exogenous to narrative belief and VIBs.
3. One of the potential strength of the article is the 21 item scale for assessing the perceived consequences of the war. The authors should front-load this more as an original contribution.
4. Is it reasonable to make the VIB for, e.g., power "allow me to gain money and status", do personal? Values are also about the effects on all things you

identify with, such as your country, which is likely to be far more appropriate for the national war.

5. In the end, I think the empirical results simply show that if one says positive things about the war, they are likely to be more supportive of it, rather than evidencing the authors claims.

Round 2

Editor Decision

Dear Authors,

Thank you for submitting your important work, “War, what is It Good For? Value-Instantiating Beliefs Link Propaganda to Political Intentions Beyond Ideology and Identity” to our special issue on the Psychology of Pushback. We were fortunate to receive reviews from the same two experts who reviewed the previous version. Additionally, we both independently re-evaluated your manuscript.

We believe your paper has improved considerably since the last revision. The theoretical framework is clearer, the study’s contribution is more convincing, and your analytic approach is concise. However, one Reviewer still has reservations, particularly regarding how you addressed their previous concerns about sampling biases in this repressive setting. The other Reviewer has no further concerns.

We ask you to address the first Reviewer’s remaining concerns alongside the issues we identified when reading the new version.

The Reviewer is unsatisfied with how sampling concerns were handled and makes a strong empirical case. We agree that personal and professional experience cannot be used to refute sampling concerns, please thoroughly engage with these issues in the Discussion. It is quite likely, as the Reviewer states, that current state repression is reflected in your sample composition and responses. As previously requested—but not yet addressed—you need to include a sentence in the abstract highlighting that you discuss such concerns in your paper. Make sure to omit any statement such as “we conclude that the political nature of the questionnaire did not lead to strong self-selection effects.” You simply have no strong empirical ground to do so, and the documentation of the repressive context strongly suggests this may have been a concern (this cannot be prevented, so it is a feature of this type of research and not a major limitation, but it needs to be thoroughly elaborated on).

Related to this, please also thoroughly address the Reviewer’s concern regarding how quota sampling may ensure demographic balance but not balance on your psychological constructs. We agree that using gender as a proxy for risk-taking is not meaningful in such a sampling design. That being said, we are less concerned than the Reviewer regarding the choice of the Schwartz framework as it is one of the few thoroughly validated options. But for readers outside that sphere, it could be good with 2-3 sentence in the introduction explaining this choice in light of the research goals (i.e., why is Schwartz’ framework suitable when studying attitudes or intentions regarding war).

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for providing an extensive overview of deviations from the pre-registration in the SOM. However, please describe these in more detail at the end of the manuscript, in line with our request from the previous round. Readers need to understand both how and why you deviated from the plan.

The Reviewer comments that while the Introduction is much improved, something we strongly agree with, additional refinement is still needed in some places. Please follow the Reviewer's recommendation for revision of the Introduction text in your next revision of the manuscript.

METHODS

- When reporting SEM for your measures, please ensure you also report chi-squared in the format $\chi^2(df) = XX.XX$, $p = .xxx$.
- It appears you still do not present correlations for two-item VBIs scales and alpha for the one three-item scale. Please do so, as this is essential information about the reliability of your core scales.
- Scale endpoints are still missing for RWA, SDO, and the behavioral intentions measures.
- Thank you for listing packages, version numbers, and references. Please add a reference for tidyverse as well.
- You only report one alpha, although you have two behavioral intentions—if both had a value of .95, please indicate this in the text, otherwise present two alphas.
- When describing how participants were informed about the study, you write: "The study description and the participant information explained that the study will assess attitudes towards the war in Ukraine." We assume you used the term "special operation" here? If not, please discuss the reasons for this choice and the potential consequences regarding other sampling concerns.
- **Participant security:** Please delete demographic variables from the data shared online and explain this in the manuscript. The reason is that Yandex likely knows which participants took part in the study, and these demographics could, in theory, be used to match participants, thereby revealing the political profiles of these participants.
- While you now acknowledge the oversampling of men, you state that the sample is more similar to population parameters on other variables. However, what follows (ethnicity, age, education) shows a similar, if not sometimes larger, deviation. Please revise.

ANALYSIS

- Thank you for Figure 1. Could you add 95% CIs around the mean to it? If this creates clutter, you may drop the boxplot and present means and 95% CIs within the violin chart instead.
- In Figure 2, could you give the 0 line a different color? This will facilitate visual comprehension. You should also explain that significant effects are presented with black dots and non-significant ones with white.
- Can you provide corresponding figures for the association of VBIs with attitudes and intentions toward war measure? This will reduce the amount of text needed (regarding reported statistics) and communicate findings more effectively. This could be presented in a three-panel figure to keep the presentation parsimonious.
- We need much more information about the fit of the different LPA solutions. The figure in the SOM does not provide this, and the information should be presented as a table in the main text. You need to provide the AIC, BIC, BLRT, and entropy. Furthermore, we need to better understand your choice of a two-profile model. Several aspects need to be considered here and weighted against each other: first, the fit; second, the sample size per profile within the solution (usually, though this depends on sources, all profiles in a solution should capture at least 15% of the participants); and third, the theoretical meaningfulness of the solution.

STYLISTIC ISSUES

- Please move the Data Availability Statement to the end of the paper, before the references, per journal standards. Please also move the ethics statement to the Methods. Here you can explain that demographic variables were omitted due ensure the security of participants.
- It is great that you now present example items in quotation marks. However, please do not italicize them.
- Greek letters should not be italicized; only Latin letters should be, as per APA7.
- As per APA7, you must write out numbers that start a sentence, such as “Ninety-one percent identified as ethnically Russian…” (or the year “2022” in the discussion).
- One *d* value is missing a decimal point: *d* = 25 (l. 345).
- Your title still focuses on mediation (which is not central to the paper anymore) and is jargon-heavy. Consider the following alternative that also highlights the unique context: “War, What Is It Good For? Propaganda and Perceived Security and Tradition Benefits are Linked to War Support and Resistance in Wartime Russia”
- There are still major issues with your citations and references. Please run the file through our app at https://apa.advances.in. The app detects many issues (though some false positives may occur). Your issues are manifold, including

using “et al.” for two-author papers, using “&” for work with more than two authors in citations, missing periods and commas, missing author names, uncited work listed in references, cited work not listed in references, and many more. Please **thoroughly** address all issues for the next version. We cannot accept a new submission that contains numerous errors.

- Please ensure you export all figures as SVG and insert them directly into the Word document for the next round. This will ensure high resolution.
- On l. 404, you describe an association as positive, but the estimate is negative.
- On l. 437, there is a repeated word.
- Please follow APA7 format for the title of Figure 3.
- L. 463: Instead of “in” you likely mean “and.”
- l. 470-471 and 499: Please drop results from the k-means clustering.

DISCUSSION

Please explain why data-driven NLP with large-scale data is difficult to generalize; your LPA is also data-driven so similar limitations apply as well.

In conclusion, it is clear that your manuscript has improved in major ways. Our remaining comments are intended to help your work make the strongest possible contribution to the literature. We therefore invite you to submit a revised version by December 23rd. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require additional time.

Best,

Jonas R. Kunst & John F. Dovidio

Reviewer 1

Original comments by R1	Author response	Comments on the first revised version of the manuscript by R1
Theory 1-2. I fail to understand the usefulness of the chosen theoretical framework centered on VIBs. For example, lines 92–95: "Measuring and comparing the VIBs across the 10 values allows estimating the 'motivational meaning' of an action or event: does an individual see car travel as primarily a safe option to travel? A threat to the environment? A pleasant activity?" What do we gain from such classification? What does this framework tell us that we couldn't learn simply by measuring how people perceive cars? Overall, and as explained in my overall assessment of contributions above, I find the theoretical framework unnecessarily complex, jargon-heavy, and not helpful in guiding the empirical analysis. One could simply test how different types of media exposure relate to different beliefs among participants (e.g., attitudes toward the war) and then conduct a mediation analysis using those as variables. Rather than relying on VIBs and other abstract constructs, one could argue that different people perceive war in different ways along the dimensions outlined in the manuscript (e.g., security), and these differences then relate to different intentions for political action.	We revised the introduction to describe the framework more efficiently and with less jargon in a new section "Value and Value-Instantiating Beliefs.	The introduction has been improved. However, some parts still remain difficult to understand. For example, the first paragraph of Introduction contains indirect, unnecessarily abstract language. I won't comment on the language/clarity anymore. Please consider my original comments on the clarity, abstraction, etc., and consider another round of proof-reading so that scholars, including non-experts, understand it. The text following this intro paragraph is more readable (lines 64–111). Can't say the same about 112–129.

Hypotheses: 3. Numbers of hypotheses in the paper do not correspond to those in the preregistration form. In fn1, it is stated that "These hypotheses [H1, H1a, and H1b] correspond to H1 and H4 of the preregistration protocol". But they in fact correspond to H4, H4a, and H4b.	We now detail the correspondence between the preregistered hypotheses and reported analyses in Table S0.	Good.
Also, why is only this selection of three hypotheses reported, when the preregistration includes 10 hypotheses? The authors state in fn1: "Additional hypotheses regarding trust towards the media and conspiracy beliefs (H2 and H3) were preregistered but are not included in this paper". No explanation is given for this omission. And what about the remaining hypotheses—why are they excluded from the present ms?	We now include the justification for selection of the analyses in the body and the note for Table S0.	Fine. Though, readers may still wonder why "Additional hypotheses regarding trust towards the media and conspiracy beliefs were preregistered and the tests are reported in the Supplementary Materials" and not as part of the main text. Because they are thematically different, or? Might be a good idea to explain.
6-17; 24-25 Credibility of the sample: The ms provides little information about the surveyed sample. Who are the participants? What do they represent? Why did these participants agree to take part in an online survey that asks about political topics in a highly repressive, nearly totalitarian country? The authors themselves note in lines 150–155: "In all materials, the Russian invasion of Ukraine was referred to as 'The special military operation in Ukraine,' as at that time the use of the word 'war' was criminally prosecuted".	Points 6-17 rest on the assumption that the survey could have been seen as a security risk by the participants. We disagree with this assessment from personal and professional experience (three out of four authors on the paper come from Russia; all know the political context well) and see no support for this idea in our	Please consider my role as a reviewer and that I cannot treat "personal and professional experience" as evidence. I also have Russian colleagues, and their opinions differ from yours. But I cannot take their views as evidence either. It would be more compelling to present evidence showing that the general population in Russia are not afraid to express their opinions to strangers/in a survey, especially concerning "SMO", a highly sensitive topic in Russia, with people being jailed for just using "war". A comparison to the US raises doubts about the appreciation of the pervasiveness and character of repression in Russia. It is true that the US has experienced considerable democratic backsliding. However, comparing the US

This highlights the severity of repression people face within Russia. Under such conditions—where even using a single word can result in imprisonment—why would anyone participate in an online survey involving political issues, and why would they risk expressing views that could be interpreted as critical of the regime? The sample is likely to be heavily skewed toward a very specific subset of the population, e.g., highly risk prone individuals, underground members of opposition, etc. This issue deserves discussion, and there is no such discussion in the present ms.	data. There are no known cases of Russians being persecuted for survey responses(Rosenfeld, 2022). The vast majority of political repressionsin Russia are directed at public political acts, or/and at public figures. Putin's Russia is described as an 'informational autocracy' (Guriev, 2019) – ruled by informational manipulation rather than fear. In many ways, it is more akin to Trumpism than to 20th centurystyle totalitarian dictatorships.	and Russia with respect to their repression levels goes against much of what we know about repression in Russia. To avoid subjectivity in my own comments, consider first conventional indicators of political repression, such as the Political Terror Scale (PTS). Russia was assigned 4, 5, 4, 5 by PTS_A (based on Amnesty International reports) and 4, 4, 4, 4 by PTS_H (based on Human Rights Watch reports) [I exclude PTS_S, due to it being compromised by the Turmp administration] for years 2021, 2022, 2023, 2024 (respectively). PTS = 4 is described as "Civil and political rights violations have expanded to large numbers of the population. Murders, disappearances, and torture are a common part of life. In spite of its generality, on this level terror affects those who interest themselves in politics or ideas". PTS = 5 is described as "Terror has expanded to the whole population. The leaders of these societies place no limits on the means or thoroughness with which they pursue personal or ideological goals." Analogous scores for the US are 3, 3, 3, 3 (PTS_A) and 3, 2, 3, 2 (PTS_H). Then, consider V-Dem's Physical Violence Index, which captures the extent to which physical integrity is respected in a country, where physical integrity is defined as "freedom from political killings and torture by the government. Among the set of civil liberties, these liberal rights are the most relevant for political competition and accountability. The index is based on indicators that reflect violence committed by government agents and that are not directly referring to elections". Russia scores .29, .21, .26, and .22 for the years 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024, whereas the US scores .95, .96, .95, .95 for the same years. 0 is the min score, and 1 is the max score, on the index, with higher scores reflecting higher respect for physical integrity. Let me quote from Amnesty International country report 2024/2025 on Russia:

		"The rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association remained severely restricted. Dissenters faced arbitrary prosecutions, unfair trials, heavy fines and lengthy prison terms under a plethora of laws that failed to meet international human rights standards. Counter-extremism and counterterrorism legislation was weaponized to prosecute government critics and religious groups as well as children. A growing number of people were prosecuted for treason and espionage. More than 60 organizations were declared "extremist" and banned. Trials failed to meet international standards of fairness. Torture and other ill-treatment in custody prevailed and was committed with near total impunity. Persecution of LGBTI people increased. Regional authorities continued introducing barriers to abortion…". https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/eastern-europe-and-central-asia/russia/ Then from Human Rights Watch: "The invasion also marked the start of a new, all-out drive to eradicate public dissent in Russia. Through new laws and other measures, Russian authorities doubled down in their relentless attack against free speech, civic activism, independent journalism, and political dissent, in an apparent attempt to silence public opposition to the war, any criticism of the government, or any expression of social non-conformism. New war censorship laws criminalize any criticism of Russia's war on Ukraine or questioning official narrative and state propaganda. The war and subsequent general mobilization led to considerable exodus of population out of Russia. Key political opposition leaders are behind bars, as are a growing number of critics of the authorities and of the war". https://www.hrw.org/europe/central-asia/russia Then, consider reports specific to online surveillance/repression capabilities: "The authorities have tightened control over RuNet's architecture by consolidating more than half of the Russian IP addresses in the hands of seven state-tied internet service providers and decreasing the overall number of ISPs. The government also created a national domain name system (DNS), which works as the address book of the internet, and transport layer security (TLS) certificates,

		which verify that the website belongs to a trusted entity and that the exchange between the website server and the user is encrypted. As a result, the state obtained more control over internet traffic and enhanced abilities for censorship and potential interception. Whilst the state might not have fully achieved the stated purpose of the "sovereign internet" law, the authorities' efforts to implement it, many of which remain largely invisible to the majority of the RuNet users, carry serious risks for their rights and freedoms as they enable the state to censor internet traffic as well as control its routing, and intercept and decrypt data, allowing for surveillance on a mass scale. For an internet user in Russia, these measures mean blocked access to websites and to social media platforms deemed unwanted by the authorities. This is coupled with shrinking availability of tools to circumvent such blocking, which severely limits access to independent and non state-approved information, and occasional inability to access key services, receive information and communicate online due to collateral blockings and local shutdowns. These measures also undermine the security of user communications online, exposing them to threats from external parties and state surveillance". https://www.hrw.org/report/2025/07/30/disrupted-throttled-and-blocked/state-censorship-control-and-increasing-isolation Even before the 2022 invasion, online surveillance/repression has been extensive with real-world consequences: "Authorities have unjustifiably prosecuted dozens on criminal charges for social media posts, online videos, media articles, and interviews. Today, many Russians are increasingly unsure about what is acceptable speech and what could land them a large fine or prison term...Meanwhile, the authorities have vigorously enforced older laws to prosecute online speech. In doing so they have increasingly conflated criticism of the government with "extremism," especially on certain topics such as the occupation of Crimea, criticism or satire regarding the Russian Orthodox Church, or Russia's armed intervention in Syria. The number of criminal cases stemming from "extremism" charges, especially in connection with sharing statements and opinions online, has soared. Based on data provided by the SOVA Center, a prominent Russian think-tank, the number of social media users convicted of

		extremism offences in 2015 was 216, in comparison with 30 in 2010. Between 2014 and 2016, approximately 85 percent of convictions for "extremist expression" dealt with online expression, with punishments ranging from fines or community service to prison time. In the period between September 2015 and February 2017, the number of people who went to prison for extremist speech spiked from 54 to 94". https://www.hrw.org/report/2017/07/18/online-and-all-fronts/russias-assault-freedom-expression PTS, Amnesty International, and Human Rigts Watch can be criticized for Western bias, for being misinformed, etc. But you can also find reports from within Russia or by Russian scholars in exile. Here's an excerpt from *re: Russia* report on repression (translated to English): "In 2024, the repressive machinery of 'wartime Putinism' fully transitioned from its reactive phase to a mode of systemic stabilisation. The scope of politically motivated repressions remains largely unchanged compared to 2023, but the severity that began to increase in 2023 has now become the norm. This severity is evident in the high proportion of cases resulting in imprisonment, the demonstrative harshness of sentences, and the widespread use of torture and torturous conditions imposed on the persecuted" https://re-russia.net/en/analytics/0358/ Here are other reports on the pervasiveness of repression: https://re-russia.net/en/analytics/0227/ https://data.ovd.info/politicheskiye-repressii-v-rossii-v-2024-godu#6 This sits uneasily with the claim that the regime rules "by informational manipulation rather than fear". At minimum, the paper should consider whether Russia's extensive and intrusive online surveillance/repression apparatus—with documented real-world consequences such as imprisonment and torture—makes respondents hesitant to answer an online survey conducted by strangers.

		This concern is especially relevant for politically sensitive opinions that diverge from the regime's stance, such as intentions to oppose the "SMO", and for individuals lacking IT expertise, who tend to distrust online anonymity. However, the most pertinent data for the current discussion is presented in the following reports appearing on *re: Russia*: https://re-russia.net/en/expertise/0275/ Surveys conducted by Russian scholars, within Russia or in exile, show that people are unwilling to discuss controversial topics even in their close circles, especially concerning SMO/War. Here's one quote: "Despite the fact that the second 'railway' test sample included more strongly convinced supporters of both viewpoints, the majority, both among opponents and supporters of the 'special operation', preferred not to engage in conversation. This is one of the key characteristics of Russians' attitudes toward the 'special operation': it is a topic people prefer not to discuss. In September 2024, during the fourteenth wave of the Chronicles project poll, only 14% of Russian adults stated that they would like to discuss the war more within their close social circles, either to defend their own viewpoint or to learn about others'. Meanwhile, around 40% expressed a desire to talk about the 'special operation' less, and 22% actively tried to avoid the topic altogether. Thus, despite the fact that the 'SMO' remained the most significant event for Russians over three years, more than 60% avoided discussing it – not only in public settings like a train but also within their immediate social circles". And then: "Finally, the 'railway test', just as it did a year and a half ago, reveals that in random encounters with unfamiliar people, opponents of the 'special operation' are far less likely to speak out than supporters. As a result, their presence in public discussions appears even lower than in public opinion surveys. Among those who declared their support for the war (52%), 43% were willing to engage in discussion, making up 22.4% of the total sample. Among those who oppose the war (11%), only 25% were willing to discuss it—just 2.8%of the total sample. Thus, in a survey where 63% expressed an opinion, the number

		of declared war supporters was 4.7 times higher than that of declared opponents. But in a hypothetical Russian train conversation, where only 25% would participate in a discussion, the number of war supporters would outnumber opponents by eight times. This is how the 'spiral of silence' works". In the Limitations section, the authors of the present ms note: "This is consistent with prior findings that failed to find systematic change in sampling composition, response rate to the polls, length of interviews, and rate of interview interruptions after the 2022 invasion of Ukraine (Rosenfeld, 2022; Snegovaya, 2024; Zvonovskii & Khodykin, 2024)". However, this representation of Zvonovskii & Khodykin is incomplete. While they report limited evidence of change over time, they also find that respondents, especially those opposing the SMO, are reluctant to discuss the topic. The statement in the manuscript truncates this nuance and omits baseline findings that do not support its argument. Including these details would provide a more accurate and balanced representation of the evidence. This nuance is critical, as it directly relates to the concern about self-censorship and fear in survey responses (Zvonovskii & Khodykin are the authors of the survey data reference above). If respondents are unwilling to discuss sensitive topics even in their close circles, it is reasonable to expect greater reluctance in an online survey, where they cannot verify the researchers' identity or intentions. All of the above does not imply that the manuscript totally lacks value. The surveys show that, although most respondents avoid discussing these topics—especially if they hold negative views toward the SMO—some do speak out. And even if the sample is unrepresentative and likely overrepresenting SMO supporters, analysing the associations among the variables of interests remains important, given that we lack research on these topics from Russia. That said, the current manuscript paints a very unbalanced picture. To improve credibility, I recommend moving beyond arguments based on face validity or personal impressions—even those informed by experience in Russia. Instead, the paper would benefit from a more open qualification of the findings, with greater

		skepticism and objectivity. Explicitly acknowledging potential biases and limitations will strengthen, not weaken, the credibility of the paper.
	In response to the comments, we expanded the information about the sample in both methods and Discussion (limitations) sections. We compared the demographics of our sample to the national averages on education, ethnicity,national identity and did not identify a strong skew – suggesting that we did not select onstrong correlates of these variables. To test whether we accidentally selected for risk-prone individuals, we looked at gender differences in reported attitudes. Knowing that women are significantly more risk-averse than men (Borghans et al., 2009), and assuming reporting negative attitudes was seen as a risk, we would expect women to report more	The qualifications regarding potential sample selection bias are welcome, but they remain superficial and appear aimed at defending the study rather than fully acknowledging its limitations. Quota sampling ensures demographic quotas are met, but it does not eliminate selection bias. When individuals selected for a quota decline participation—especially after seeing sensitive terms like “SMO”—the next candidate is recruited until the quota is filled. Those who refuse are likely systematically different from those who accept (e.g., more risk-averse, more likely to oppose SMO). As a result, demographic balance does not guarantee representativeness on key variables of interest. Do you have data on response rate? Who decline participation? Who tend to choose “prefer not to say”? These are standard questions scholars ask when dealing with data from authoritarian regimes. Comparing men and women in your sample tells us little about whether risk-takers and risk-avoiders are balanced, because quota sampling fills quotas with those willing to participate—potentially more risk-prone individuals. This interpretation is supported by your reported means, which suggest unusually risk-prone women in the sample.

	positive attitudes towards the war. The opposite was the case: men reported more positive attitudes towards the war (M = 3.04) than women (M = 2.73), t(960) = 3.73, p <.001.	
Line 158 states: "1011 people gave informed consent to participate in the study". I would be curious to know what the informed consent form explained to prospective participants. What was the study described as being about? Who were the researchers? From which institutions? These are the kinds of details that informed consent forms typically must include. I was unable to find these materials among the files in the OSF repository. Even small pieces of information, such as the study's political focus or its affiliation with foreign institutions, could easily discourage participation and result in sample selection bias. From my own experience conducting surveys in repressive countries: local survey agencies report that participants often drop out once they see that the survey is about politics. Respondents are often afraid that surveys might be tools of the states, designed to identify dissidents	We added the following description to Methods section (l.348): *Participants were invited to a study entitled "Research on attitudes and political behaviour in Russia" via Yandex Toloka crowdsourcing platform. The study description and the participant information noted that attitudes towards the "special military operation in Ukraine" will be assessed, and that the study is conducted by researchers at the Higher School of Economics (Moscow) and Ruhr University Bochum.* At the time of data collection, one of the researchers had a Russian HSE affiliation, and we used it to further legitimize the study.	Thank you for quoting this here. Drawing on the polls referenced above, my assumption would be that a study "on special military operation" would be declined by many people, and disproportionately by those who feel like they have unpopular views (i.e., not supporting the "SMO"). As you explain in lines 207-208 too: "The study description and the participant information explained that the study will assess attitudes towards the war in Ukraine and political behaviour". That is where sample selection bias potentially comes in. Once again, I am not in favour of throwing out this data because you potentially have biased sample with more risk-prone individuals or SMO supporters. I am still interested in associations between variables you study in your paper among this sample. What I am in favour of is being explicit about the potential biases in the sample and discussing implications for generalization, considering how Xs relate to Ys in the sample, compared to the general population. As noted above, the current approach in the ms/revision memo is to defend the sample, in what seems an imbalanced way from readers perspective, and with not so sound arguments/evidence.

	The consent form, along with the questionnaire, is available in the OSF repository with the initial submission. We added the participant information sheet to the materials.	
The survey used direct questioning methods for politically sensitive topics. Yet there are many indirect questioning techniques available—such as item count (or list experiments), endorsement experiments, or randomized response techniques—that can help elicit more honest responses under conditions of fear of repression. The authors should explain why these were not used.	We used a list experiment to measure past behaviour in this study. We did not preregister the analysis for past behaviour because (1) our theoretical focus was on intentions; (2) unlike opinions, political behaviour is targeted by state security, and many forms of it are criminalized; so we expected a skew for behaviour (3) we knew that political participation is rare in Russia, and were not confident that we will get sufficient data. However, the relationships for past behaviour were similar to those for behavioural intentions (e.g. for focal results, LPA profile is a significant statistical predictor of past pro-war	You can use list experiments and other indirect questioning techniques to measure behavioral intentions. I recommend at least acknowledging whether you attempted such approaches or discussing them in the Limitations section. As it stands, scholars studying collective action in repressive states will likely find the paper falling short of methodological standards in this literature. The exclusive reliance on direct questioning, combined with the assertion, with little supporting direct evidence, that data from Russia should be accepted at face value, will be seen as highly unusual by scholars in this field, and in a negative sense. Also, I just now noted that not all my comments were included in the revision memo. I wrote: “23. It would, if the data were credible. Although political/collective action has been widely studied in social psychological research, very few studies come from repressive countries, where dynamics of collective action are very different. Nicole Tausch, Julia Becker, and their associates have published several articles using such samples (including Russia), highlighting the lack and need of such research, as well as discussing the dynamics of collective action in repressive contexts. This work is not engaged in the present ms.” More generally, there is little engagement with prior work on collective action in general, and collective action in repressive countries in particular, which likely

	action and attitude, but not anti-war action, after controlling for RWA, SDO, and NatId), albeit weaker. This is likely because over 80% of participants did not report participating in any political action – which is consistent with the 'muted reaction' to the invasion noted in the introduction.	explains the shortcomings in methodology/acceptance of data at face value I describe above. Disclaimer: I am not Nicole Tausch or Julia Becker, and they are not my collaborators. I am not trying to score here citations.
18. The presentation of results could be improved: There is no clear correspondence between H1, H1a, and H1b. It would be helpful to just simply state: "To test H1, we have conducted...". Now, the reader must figure what tests constitutes the test of which hypothesis.	We now reference the hypothesis test in text (l.703).	Good.
Modelling: 19. Lines 379–381: "Empirically, using a quota sample from an authoritarian country at war, we show that even in a repressive context with a heavily funded propaganda machine, substantial variation in construals exists". You would expect variation in these variables in any context.	We agree and removed the phrasing.	Good.
20. Line 390: "While the patterns that we present here are robust". Robustness of results has not been explicitly demonstrated (e.g., I see no tests with alternative modeling techniques, measures, etc.).	We now analyse associations between media, raw and ipsatized VIBs, and attitudes / intentions using simple correlations, multiple regressions, profile-based	Good.

	and mediation analyses; demonstrate consistent pattern of relations using attitude and behavioural intention as DVs; and report additional analyses in the new Supplementary Materials (Tables S7-S15, Figures S1-S3).	
21. The abstract contains some unnecessary jargon and indirect language. For example, the last sentence: "Our findings offer a novel cognitive-motivational mechanism for modeling the effects of propaganda on behaviour, suggesting the power lies not only in persuasion or fear, but in shaping the people's perceptions of moral affordances and threats". What do you really mean by perceptions of moral affordances and threats? Whose power? What kind of power?	We rewrote the abstract to avoid jargon.	Good.
26. Lines 43-45. One sentence paragraph. A rule of thumb is to have at least three sentences per paragraph.	This paragraph was removed in editing.	Good.
27-28, 31, Definition of values. Lines 61-62: "We argue that propaganda appeals to values – broad ideas of the desirable such as safety, status, kindness – and provides people with ways to express themselves in ways that are both personally meaningful	We rely on Schwartz's definition of values. We now place it as the first sentence of the new section "Values and Value-Instantiating Beliefs (l.183).	Relying on Schwartz's definitions does not automatically make them more convincing. For example, consider the first item, "Security", defined as "Safety, harmony, and stability of society, of relationships and of self". As noted in my original review, this "definition" reads more like a list of related terms than a clear conceptual statement. Moreover, it combines multiple elements that appear to be distinct constructs. Why, for instance, is "harmony" grouped under the same

and acceptable to the state". The definition of "values" is unclear ("broad ideas of the desirable such a safety..."). I fail to understand this definition. What are "values"? This is a central concept and must be defined clearly. There are two columns: "Value Type" and "Defintion". However, some "Definitions" are not really definitions, but simply lists/series of examples or sub-categories of the "Value Type".	In the table note, we indicate that the definitions of individual value types are reproduced from Schwartz (2012). (l.246)	umbrella as "safety"? Harmony itself is difficult to define—what does it really mean? One could experience personal harmony while living in an unsafe society, and vice versa. Constructs that bundle together several potentially independent dimensions risk becoming conceptually vague. I understand the need to build on prior work and that these definitions come from a classic source in the field. However, a sentence or two of critical self-reflection when presenting these concepts would make the paper more credible, not less.
29-30. Next paragraph, lines 65-72: Very difficult to understand. It contains a lot of jargon. Consider "Value-instantiating beliefs (VIBs) were proposed as a way of capturing context-specific differences in the motivational meaning of events".	We reworked the section to minimize the use of jargon and improve clarity.	See my comment on Introduction above.
32. Research question comes only on page 5: "By asking the Russian public about the perceived consequences of the war for values, we operationalise the question at the heart of this paper: what is war good for? – not normatively, but psychologically: what threats and opportunities does the war present to people in terms of their core values?" This is also in contrast to the question posed in the first sentence of Introduction: "What role does propaganda play in decisions to resist or comply in an authoritarian society?". Then, we have more specific RQs on page 5: "RQ1: Are there coherent construals of the war which emerge from the patterns of reported	We now state that the hypotheses are complementary to the exploratory research questions: "We ask the following exploratory research questions:" […] "*In addition*, we preregistered the following confirmatory hypotheses" (l. 261).	Still, I find too many research questions in the Introduction, which makes it difficult to grasp immediately what the core RQ is. Better to have one or a few clear RQs, stated and addressed thoroughly, rather than many that are addressed superficially or left unaddressed at all.

VIBs? RQ2: If so, are these construals predictive of intentions to resist or support the war effort? RQ3: Are they predicted over and above other relevant predictors of support for government-sanctioned violence?". But these questions also do not clearly correspond to hypotheses: "H1: The association between news consumption and attitude and intention is mediated by VIBs. H1a: Consumption of pro-government media predicts more positive VIBs about the war, which in turn predict a more positive attitude and stronger intention to act in support of the war, as well as weaker intention to protest the war. H1b: Consumption of oppositional media predicts less positive VIBs about the war which in turn predict less positive attitude and less intention to act in support of the war, as well as more intention to protest the war."		

Reviewer 2

The authors have thoroughly and satisfactorily dealt with my points. Their paper is ready for publication.